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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003432

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PINR I
SUBJECT: WASIT PC CHAIR AND GOVERNOR TRADE SHOTS

REF: BAGHDAD 3295

Classified By: PRT Wasit Team leader Robert Kagler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Wasit Provincial Council (PC) Chair Mohammed Hassan Jabber remains very much at odds with Governor Abd al-Latif Hamad Tarfah over the allocation of the 2008 ARDP budget. The battle has been joined and Jabber's grousing has included PIC terms as a target of opportunity. In the last week, the Governor's hand-picked candidate for PC Chair came close to unseating Hassan Jabber but was defeated after three rounds of voting. End summary.

Jabber's Complaints

¶2. (C) In meetings with the PRT on October 19 and 23, PC Chair Mohammed Hassan Jabber raised concerns about the draft agreement transferring security responsibilities in Wasit Province. While neither the PC Chair nor the PRT is a party to the Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) negotiations, Hassan Jabber called in PRT Team Leader (TL) and 41 FB JAG to critique the document. He was particularly concerned over provisions in the draft agreement that give Coalition Forces (CF) what he believes to be excessively broad latitude to conduct operations with minimal or no coordination with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

¶3. (C) An official letter sent by Jabber to the Governor, an independent with Da'wa leanings, made similar points, noting that CF "should be in areas far away from al-Kut" and adding that "when movements are needed this should be approved by the Governor." He also asked for the PC to have veto power over all PRT projects. TL explained that the PIC document is all but final, and along with 41 FB JAG walked through its provisions spelling out where coordination is required, but Hassan Jabber remained skeptical.

Governor vs. PC Chairman

¶4. (C) Jabber's growing unease with PIC has become part of -- and perhaps amplified by -- a broader dispute with the Governor that appears to have led the latter to attempt to replace the PC Chairman with fellow "Independent List" associate Mohammed Kazaal Shumber. On October 21, PC members twice deadlocked at 18-18; Hassan Jabber won a subsequent round on October 25 by 18-13 with three abstentions. In recent weeks the PC chair and other PC members have complained to the PRT that the Governor has hijacked the process of planning of the 2008 ARDP supplemental budget (reftel). The Governor has repeatedly made excuses to avoid briefing the PC on his proposed projects, and has announced projects that have not even been submitted to the PC, according to one PC member, on the grounds that they had previously been discussed with the chairman of the reconstruction committee.

¶5. (C) Comment: The PC Chair was clearly worried about his

prospects before the vote; on October 23 he told the PRT that he believed he had only a "50-50" chance of being reelected. The Chair's precarious political situation may have contributed to his impulse to take on the PIC draft.

End Comment.

CROCKER